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ABSTRACT

In this investigation of children's unacceptable classroom behaviors and how teachers deal with them 114 female K-3 grade teachers with three or more years of classroom experience were asked: (1) to list and describe in descending order no more than three behaviors each perceived to be most unacceptable in the classroom (only those behaviors requiring intervention on the part of the teacher); and (2) to describe in descending order no more than three techniques they judged to be most effective in dealing with these behaviors. The results revealed 19 unacceptable behaviors and 12 techniques; both were analyzed and arranged in a descending order, based on the frequency with which they were listed and described. (Author/MS)

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Dealing With Children's Unacceptable Classroom Behaviors

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Dealing With Young Children's Unacceptable Classroom Behaviors

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigage teacher prejudices against the manifestation of particular unacceptable behaviors by young children in the classroom, and to glean from teachers the most effective techniques they use to deal with these behaviors. The subjects were 114 female K-3 grade teachers, with 3 or more years of classroom experience. These teachers were asked first to list and describe, in descending order, no more than three behaviors each perceived to be most unacceptable when manifested in the classroom (only those behaviors requiring intervention on the part of the teacher); then, to describe, in descending order, no more than three techniques they judged to be most effective in dealing with these behaviors. The results revealed 19 unacceptable behaviors and 12 techniques; both were analyzed and arranged in a descending order, based on the frequency with which they were listed and described. The summary conclusions reached were that: (a) a child's manifestation of unacceptable behaviors in the classroom is due both to the child's need to manifest such behaviors and to unworthy motivations on the part of the teacher; (b) teachers do not overuse any technique, but rather are permissive enough to allow children to manifest unacceptable behaviors, but understanding enough to know when to intervene; (c) children manifesting unacceptable behaviors have a high degree of salience, and thereby receive a large amount of disciplining procedures. Ultimately, this study provides new insights into the age-old problem of classroom discipline.

Dealing With Children's Unacceptable Classroom Behaviors

Is a child's unacceptable classroom behavior a discipline problem, or is it that the teacher perceives it to be one? This question is much debated but little understood. Regardless of the position one takes, there is confusion over which techniques are most effective in dealing with unacceptable behavior. Consequently, the proverbial pendulum is swinging again. Teachers are seeking practical solutions to the age-old problem of classroom discipline.

Most classroom teachers are not behavior diagnosticians. Because of the press on their time, teachers often deal with the immediate situation, based on their own perceptions of it and in accordance with successful techniques used in the past. There is a need therefore to do more than merely discuss unacceptable behaviors as discipline problems. There is also a need to discuss teacher prejudices against these behaviors relative to the techniques used to deal with them. In this manner, we can better understand what techniques work best for which unacceptable behaviors, in order to plant our feet on the ground of reality.

Context of the Problem

The literature is replete with related questions to answer, characteristics to look for, and guidance techniques to use in observing, recording, analyzing, and understanding children's unacceptable behaviors (Washburn, 1943; Redl & Wineman, 1952; ACEI Primary Education Committee, 1968; Dreeben, 1968; Miller & Miller, 1969; Sabath, 1969; Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1971; Cohen, 1973; Law, 1972; Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1972;

Glasser, 1974; Haffner, 1974; Lee & Gropper, 1974; Ostfeld, 1974; Hildebrand, 1975; Cohen & Stern, 1975; Rader, 1975; Rudman, 1976; Heaton). These sources offer teachers information not only on how to deal with children's unacceptable behaviors manifested in classroom situations, but also include suggestions for understanding childhood behaviors and simple remedies for behavior modification.

In many of the anecdotes found in the related literature, the integrity of experienced classroom teachers appears to be not only seriously underestimated but the prejudices influencing teacher perceptions of children's behaviors are ignored. This sort of expert advice often fails to consider the existential conditions in which teachers and children live, work, and play (Hollomon, Zamora, & Werton, 1975). It is believed that the teachers themselves are the ones who best know which behaviors they perceive to be most unacceptable, as well as the most effective techniques they use to deal with such behaviors when manifested.

Prejudices against particular childhood behaviors may obstruct the teacher's ability to effectively deal with these behaviors. At times, these prejudices may cause confusion among children if the teacher puts obstacles in their way such as imposing disciplining procedures which structure children's behavior, whatever the cost. The requisite skill demanded of a teacher to sense the difference between a perceived discipline problem and a real one is enormous (Redl, 1975). This skill is thereby hard to train for and hard to maintain -- even for the teacher who has it -- when the manifestation of a particular unacceptable behavior tests the limits of both the teacher's tolerance of and prejudice against that behavior.

Experienced teachers, therefore, know that any suggested list of effective techniques by "experts" can not be clearly conceptualized in generally agreed upon formulas, committed to memory, and recited each time an unacceptable behavior is manifested. Teachers can only learn to deal effectively with these behaviors by admitting their prejudices against them, and actively seeking appropriate solutions in genuine interactions with children, within the contexts of the classroom situation, as a normal part of the ongoing teaching-learning environment.

The Problem

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate teacher prejudices against children's unacceptable behaviors in the classroom, and the techniques most frequently used to effectively deal with these behaviors. Empirical evidence collected in the form of subjective data and analyzed in a scientific manner can make an important difference between unjust assumptions about children's unacceptable behaviors and the reality of how teachers deal with these behaviors. Therefore, the basic assumption undergirding this investigation was that children's unacceptable behaviors are functions of teacher prejudices against those particular behaviors as manifested, and that the techniques used to deal with these behaviors reflect these prejudices. Thus, this report is not an integrated presentation of the pros and cons of efforts made to deal with the problem in the past, as found in the scholarly literature. The basic objective is to candidly report the results of a study designed to provide new insights into the age-old problem of classroom discipline.

Method

To contrast teacher prejudices against particular childhood behaviors with the techniques used to deal with them required a two part investigation. First, 114 kindergarten through third-grade teachers (all females), with three or more years of teaching experience, were asked to list and describe, in descending order, no more than three behaviors each perceived to be most unacceptable in the classroom. This list was to include only those behaviors requiring intervention on the part of the teacher. Then, the teachers were asked to list and describe, in descending order, no more than three techniques they judged to be most effective in dealing with each behavior listed. The anonymity of the teachers was guaranteed.

Analyses of Data

Using cross-referencing procedures, only those behaviors and techniques listed and described by at least three teachers were analyzed and included in this report. The frequency of the listing and the description of each unacceptable behavior and of each effective technique served as the means of identifying, labeling, and listing both in a hierarchical order, indicating the intensity of each prejudiced behavior and the most effective techniques used to deal with each behavior.

Results

The overall results revealed 19 unacceptable behaviors and 12 techniques. These are presented below, in accordance with the two part investigation.

Part I: Teacher Prejudices

The 19 unacceptable behaviors are presented in descending order, relative to the frequency with which they were described. These behaviors, as presented here, are simple abstractions of the composite descriptions made by the teachers. It is to be noted that there is a certain amount of overlapping concern across these behaviors, as recognized by the teachers themselves. It is also to be noted that each behavior described is not unique to any particular child, but rather a type of behavior considered to be most unacceptable by the teachers. Any one child could, for example, manifest either several of these behaviors or a variation of any one of them, depending on the context of the situation in which the behavior is manifested.

Aggressive Behavior: This behavior is manifested by a child who uses forceful action to gain his or her ends; to dominate a situation. This child is a "go-getter," acts on his or her own volition, without the direction or permission of the teacher. The child speaks up and voices his or her own opinion, without regard for the feelings or opinions of others. Such a child also challenges teaching skills; defies rules and regulations; acts out moods; and fails to accept either the responsibility or the consequences of his or her own behavior.

Appropriating Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who takes exclusive possession of objects or places, or uses something belonging to another without the expressed permission, right, or authority to do so. Such behavior is also manifested by the child who takes, for example, a pencil, paper, toy, seat, or other objects from another, without respect for either the property or the feelings of the other.

Attention-Getting Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who uses a variety of means to get the teacher's attention. In fact, this child's behavior interferes with the time the teacher has to spend with other children. This child's behavior is also perceived as an effort to secure recognition from the teacher, which does not come fast enough.

Cruel Behavior: A behavior is considered to be cruel when a child intentionally inflicts pain or suffering on another child or classroom pet, devoid of tender feelings. Such behavior is also manifested in talking rudely to the teacher or to another child, kicking, pulling hair, pinching, or stamping on the feet of other children, with the perceived intent of harming or inflicting pain.

Defiant Behavior: A child is considered to manifest defiant behavior when s/he boldly resists the teacher's authority, with the preceived intent of flaunting that authority for the purpose of having his or her own way. Such behavior is also perceived to be impudent, insolent, and sassy.

Excessively Dependent Behavior: This child's behavior indicates a constant, helpless dependence on others to do things for and with him or her. This behavior is perceived to be an inability to accept the consequences for one's own behavior. The child is perceived to experience feelings of insecurity, of being unaccepted, rejected, unpraiseworthy, incompetent, and incapable of influencing what happens to him or her. The child also appears to depend on others as a means of coping and surviving in a situation that plays on his or her self-respect.

Fighting Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who seems to have a "chip-on-the-shoulder." The child, therefore, uses direct physical contact with other children with the perceived intent of hurting them, with or without provocation. This behavior is perceived to be manifested for the purpose, as the child perceives it, of defending himself or herself from enemies, perceived and real. This child is also perceived to be hypersensitive to the intents, motives, and reactions of others to his or her own behavior.

Hostile-Venting Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who is antagonistic, inhospitable, or unfriendly. Such behavior is expressed in temper-tantrums, talking in abusive tones, the use of profane language, stubbornness, general disobedience, throwing things around, screaming, shouting, biting, moodiness, and similar types of disruptiveness. Teachers describe this child's behavior as striking out, disrupting the social order, and the like. Teachers also perceive this child as knowing that his or her behavior disrupts the social order, but the child does so with the intent of testing the teacher's frustration index. The teachers also expressed that this type of overt behavior may well indicate that the child perceives himself or herself as being incapable of living up to expectations, to perform tasks that supersede the child's ability. The child, knowing not more appropriate ways, vents hostility as a sure means of being removed from a situation with which s/he can not cope.

Lying and Stealing Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who makes untrue statements in response to questions concerned with something taken and concealed from another, with the perceived purpose of

deceiving the true owner. This behavior is described differently from that of the appropriator. Teachers perceive the intent of this behavior to be that of secretly seizing something, knowingly belonging to another, without the knowledge of the possessor, but with the intent of keeping it. The child therefore lies about how s/he came to possess it, when caught.

Maverick Behavior: This behavior is typical of a child who is "spaced-out," who refuses to take an active part in an assigned activity, or fails to work up to perceived capacity. This child is also described to manifest, at times, fearful, unhappy, bashful, sleepy, and defenseless behaviors. Such a child, according to descriptions, seems to lack the ability to cope and relate to a task to be performed, or to endure the pressures of classroom life. This child is also described to be uncooperative, rebellious, and alienated, for reasons unknown to the teacher.

Mischievous Behavior: This behavior is manifested by a child who appears to constantly annoy, trouble, or disrupt others in an irresponsibly playful manner. This behavior is manifested in jokes, giggles, and in taunting or seducing other children to misbehave. Such behaviors are perceived by the teachers to be disrespectful, undesirable, silly, devious, and busybody -- to the extent that they disrupt the social order.

Nonconforming Behavior: A child's behavior is described to be nonconforming when the established rules and regulations are disobeyed, or when the child fails to adapt the prevailing norms of classroom behavior, generally accepted and adhered to by the other children. Such behavior is

considered to be offensive, a blatant unwillingness to abide by the norms necessary to maintain classroom order. The child is perceived to be aware of the classroom social norms -- what is expected for and from her -- yet the behavior manifested, for whatever reason, appears to fly in the face of specified role expectations.

Quarreling Behavior: This behavior is described to be manifested by children who constantly complain, dispute the opinions of others, and therefore find themselves in an unending conflict with others -- finding fault in whatever others do. These children also seek to get the teacher to decide in their favor when in conflict with others. The teachers expressed an awareness of the importance of letting children work out conflicting situations for themselves. However, the teachers were not sure of the extent to which they should refrain from intervening. They indicated that young children need to struggle with conflict and tears, in order to learn the value of the pleasure that comes with their own satisfactory solutions. In addition, the teachers recognized the need to help children gain insight into the motivations, desires, rights and fears of others, without stifling children's socio-emotional development.

Smart-Alecky Behavior: This behavior describes the child perceived to be a "show-off." The child spontaneously makes unusually clever or taunting remarks, especially at a moment when the teacher thinks that the child should be serious about performing the task at hand. The manifestation of this conspicuous behavior is perceived to be insensitive to the teacher's feeling in the classroom situation. The effect of this behavior depends, therefore, on the mood or discomfort it causes the teacher. Thus, teachers

describe this child to be a manipulator, a ringleader, a seducer, and a bad example for the other children to follow. However, some teachers suggested that this child may play the role of a smart-aleck, in order to discover the limits of teacher control, simply because the child has no other way of knowing just how far s/he can go within the constraints of the classroom.

Tattletaling Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who makes it a practice of informing the teacher of the misdeeds of peers. Although the teachers find this behavior to be annoying, they also perceive it to be a means of getting attention and finding out what the limitations of classroom discipline are, relative to how far one child can go without punishment and sanctions.

Crying Behavior: This behavior was described for the child who cries excessively or screams for no apparent reason. The teachers perceived crying to be partially due to fear of school, and also to be manifested by children who feel "picked-on." Such children sometimes refuse to eat, retreat, squirm, wet their clothes, shuffle in their seats, and manifest a variety of moody behaviors. Some of these children were described as being chronically ill, thumbsuckers, nailbiters, unhappy, and apparently sleepy.

Excessively Untidy Behavior: This child often comes to school untidy, clothes not clean, hair not combed, teeth not brushed, shoes unpolished, body unbathed; is careless about table manners, poorly organized in work habits; belongings are poorly kept; constantly drops or

spills something without caring enough to pick up and clean up in working areas, and thereby is not well accepted by peers, who complain about his or her untidiness.

Whining Behavior: This behavior is manifested by the child who speaks in a highly pitched, plaintive voice, or who expresses wants and needs in an inarticulate sing-song tone. This tone of voice, and manner of speaking,appears to indicate that the child is either unhappy or that his or her needs are not being appropriately met. The teachers perceived whining to be unacceptable, primarily because they know not its origin or its causes, and thereby know not which measures to use to remedy it. Regardless of the changes made in the classroom climate, activities, methods and materials, space and sequencing of time schedules, emotional response, security measures, amount of praise, novel stimuli and affective interactions, some children continue to whine, and thereby annoy the teacher.

Withdrawal Behavior: This child's behavior is perceived to be a cop-out, attentively and emotionally. A child who detaches himself or herself socially and refuses to participate in classroom activities is described to manifest this behavior. The teachers also report that such a child often retreats from the learning situation and daydreams. Difficulty is expressed by the teachers in their efforts to bring the child back into the orbit of the reality of the classroom situation. Some teachers expressed having been physically attacked by a child when they persisted on getting the child involved in an activity, which the child apparently withdrew from out of a lack of interest, fear, or stubborn refusal.

Part II: Effective Techniques

The techniques most frequently used, as listed and described by the teachers, were given the following labels. It is to be noted that these techniques tend to deal more with the child's unacceptable behaviors as perceived by the teacher than with techniques of changing teacher perceptions of these behaviors.

Confrontation and Redirection: This technique is most often used by the teachers to deal with aggressive, appropriating, cruel, defiant, fighting, hostile-venting, maverick, mischievous, nonconforming, quarreling, smart-alecky, and excessively untidy behaviors. Applying this technique, the teacher intervenes while the child is perceived to be misbehaving, and offers the child alternative ways of behaving -- choices and options -- in order to de-escalate his or her energies and actions. The teacher also impresses upon the child the consequences of the unacceptable behavior in conflicting situations.

Using this technique of control, the teacher also redirects the child's unacceptable behaviors by assigning him or her specific, responsible tasks to perform, presumably of equal value to the child. Such tasks include those that help the child to become more independent, as well as to develop a sense of competent achievement, belongingness, and self-esteem. That is, the teachers assign such tasks to a child as the child is perceived to be able to handle, including the taking of attendance, being chairman of a classroom group activity, housekeeping chores, reporting the results of group experiments, and other special tasks that children usually enjoy performing, especially when the rewards are the teacher's approval, and a feeling of peer acceptance and self-achievement.

Didactic Rules and Regulations: This technique is used to deal with appropriators, and frequently used with perceived aggressors, attention-getters, and children who are excessively untidy. This technique is perceived by teachers to be a deterrent to the manifestation of unacceptable behaviors before they happen. Rule-governed behaviors serve as determinants of prior conditions which specify the expectations, sanctions, and constraints, in order that the child may internalize standards -- classroom norms and role-expectations.

This technique includes outright teaching the child how s/he is expected to behave in the classroom. It is using a set of prescribed controls that have been found to be effective in classroom management procedures. It is also used to remind the child of the established rules and regulations of the class -- what is tolerated and what is not tolerated and the consequences of the manifestation of certain unacceptable behaviors.

Behavior Assessment and Prescription: This technique is used after a particular behavior has been manifested over a period of time, especially when an unacceptable pattern seems to be emerging, including chronic illness, school phobia, lying and stealing, and the like. The teachers most often use this technique to assess and prescribe procedures for dealing with behaviors that are attention-getting, defiant, excessively dependent, hostile, lying and stealing, maverick, nonconforming, crying, whining, and withdrawal syndromes.

Using this technique, the teacher draws from professional experience the best available information, knowledge, and resources, in order to prescribe a course of action for modifying the unacceptable behaviors manifested by individual children and groups. This technique is especially geared toward handling children with some sort of identified psychological or behavioral problem.

Laissez-Faire (Ignoring It): This technique is most often used to deal with the attention-getter, the tattletale, and the child who withdraws. It is also frequently used to deal with the maverick, the mischievous, the nonconformer, and the smart-aleck.

This technique is used in an attempt to establish a middle-ground between an authoritarian and a permissive classroom environment -- between freedom and limitation. The teacher, for example, permits the child to assert himself or herself, when s/he feels strongly about something, without the fear of being criticized or falling short. The intent is not to deal directly with the child in order to solve behavior problems, but rather to accept the child and seek to alter the situation that provokes the unacceptable behavior. Also, using this technique, the teachers attempt not to find unworthy motivations for controlling children's unacceptable behaviors, at whatever cost.

Parent-Teacher Conference: The teachers use this technique most often to deal with the child who is cruel, defiant, excessively untidy, and who withdraws. The teachers were cautious to observe that the manifestation of some of these behaviors may be the result of family problems, a history of failure, negative self-concept, and the like.

The teachers expressed that the objective is the sharing between parent and teacher of methods of discipline that simply work better in getting the child to stop misbehaving. The basic intent is to strengthen the bonds between parents and teachers in their efforts to positively relate to the child and his or her problems. This technique involves both parents and teachers as givers and receivers of pertinent information relative to the child's unacceptable behaviors, with the hope of agreeing on measures of common social control that ultimately lead to self-control on the part of the child in conflicting classroom situations.

Teacher-Teacher Conference: This technique is used most frequently to deal with children who quarrel, are excessively dependent, the maverick, and the defiant child. Using this technique, the child's teacher enters into a reciprocal agreement with another teacher so that if the child needs to be removed from the classroom environment, for a short duration, the child can be sent to the alternate teacher. The teacher may also consult with another teacher who has had to deal with other children who manifested similar behaviors. These teachers share a possible assessment of a particular behavior, in order to better understand the prescriptions they make for handling some situations. They also exchange information on known family problems and possible support in order to better understand and interpret a particular child's unacceptable behavior.

Teacher-Principal Conference: The frequency of use of this technique indicates that teachers perceive themselves to be capable of handling most unacceptable behaviors. The teachers also indicated they are aware of the fact that some principals judge the teacher's handling of behavior problems to be an indication of teaching competence. Their comments therefore revealed that this technique is used sparingly, mostly for dealing with children who lie and steal, are smart-alecky, defiant, fight, and fail to conform to school social norms. However, some teachers did mention that, at times, they do find it imperative that they consult the building principal for counsel and advice as to how they should proceed to deal with a behavior problem over which they had little or no control.

Punishment and Sanction: This technique is used mostly to deal with defiant, hostile, lying and stealing, fighting, and quarreling behaviors. Using this technique, the teacher denies the child a privilege, gives him or her an undesirable task to perform, scolds the child for negative behavior, or refuses to do things with and for the child, when s/he desires teacher assistance. The primary objective is the maintenance of the continuous and diffuse teacher-child relationship based on good will. In the process, the teacher does not cut the ground from under the child and leave him or her to suffer the consequences. Thus, the teacher helps the child to re-establish contact with the group in order that the child may save face. It was also recognized that a child may interpret differently from the teacher not only the manifestation of his or her behavior but also the consequences of that behavior.

Change the Classroom Environment: This technique was found to be most effective in dealing with children who are excessively dependent, mavericks, attention-getters, cruel, quarrelsome, mischievous, withdrawals, criers, excessively untidy, fighters, nonconformers, and smart-alecky. The teachers who described the use of this technique indicated that an atmosphere of orderliness and calm elicits like behavior, especially when experiences are structured in a way that children know the expectations and the limits.

Using this technique, the teacher endeavors to eliminate all conditions that contribute to the manifestation of inappropriate behaviors, and adds all conditions that appear to increase the child's interest in a task that influences positive involvement or evokes acceptable behavior. That is, the teacher controls the teaching-learning environment until the child has gained some ability to cope with the constraints, sanctions, choices, limitations, and other difficulties inherent in human interaction.

Isolation: The teachers used this technique mostly to deal with hostility-venters, fighters, cruel behaviors, quarrelers, and, at times, with aggressors. This technique is used both sparingly and cautiously. The teacher removes the misbehaving child from a conflicting situation in order to de-escalate the conflict, as well as to limit the educational and emotional damage that may be done to the child and other children. While the child is isolated, s/he is always given something to do, and is aided and supported by the teacher in such a way that the child's return to the group situation is facilitated. Isolation is usually of short duration; no teacher placed a child in isolation for more than five minutes; the mean duration was three minutes.

Referral: This technique is used mostly with children who withdraw, and who, at times, are cruel. The teacher refers a child whose unacceptable behaviors call for the knowledge and skills of a psychologist, a social worker, or other support specialists.

Spanking: This is the least used technique which, when used, is to deal primarily with fighting. The teacher makes physical contact with the child by spanking him or her directly by hand or by using a paddle, switch, belt, or similar instruments. Spanking is usually administered after all the other techniques have failed, and when this is supported by both the child's parents and the building principal; and only when there is a fellow teacher present to bear witness that the child is not unduly beaten or physically abused. The teachers recognized that spanking can deplete the bank of goodwill, if not administered in a climate of sustained affection and empathy.

Discussion

These results imply that all childhood behaviors are caused. That is, a child's manifestation of unacceptable behaviors in the classroom is not a sufficient condition to conclude that the behavior was motivated by a child's desire to misbehave. Such behaviors appear to result from an overriding need to achieve a goal, when the child can not perceive a better way at the moment. Such behaviors also support the notion that young children often forget or fail to manifest more socially acceptable patterns of behavior, because they have not yet formed established habits, and because their immediate needs often tend to overpower self-control. Sometimes unacceptable behavior is manifested because a child has a perceived need to get back at what s/he considers to be unreasonable or punitive disciplining procedures used by the teacher.

At other times, the manifestation of unacceptable behaviors may be the result of unworthy motivations on the part of the teacher. This is especially true when the teacher, unaware of this possibility, fails to analyze his or her own prejudices against such behaviors in light of the situation into which the child is faced, and in relationship not only to needed changes in a child's behaviors but also in the teacher's perceptions of these behaviors.

The descriptions made by the teachers also indicate that the young child needs help, particularly in clarifying who s/he is in relationship to peers, authority figures, and the constraints -- the freedoms and limitations -- within the classroom environment. The effective techniques used imply that the child also needs help in discovering and re-discovering his or her self-identity and self-esteem within the contexts of the classroom. These

observations support the notion that the teacher should control the classroom environment until the child has gained some ability to cope with the constraints, choices, limitations, and other difficulties inherent in child-child and teacher-child interactions. It is further suggested that the teacher seek to discover which specific contexts in the classroom contribute to the manifestation of what kinds of unacceptable behaviors, and then add to all conditions that appear to increase the manifestation of acceptable behaviors. After having achieved these objectives, the teacher can then seek to eliminate all conditions that are suspected to contribute to the manifestation of unacceptable behaviors.

The results of data also show that the teachers did not overuse any particular technique, although confrontation and redirection was the most pervasive. The descriptions of unacceptable behaviors also indicated that a young child's behavior, acceptable or unacceptable, is an expression of the child's needs to be related contextually to mature people -- and to confirm himself or herself in this relatedness. In addition, the data suggest that in the contemporary confusion about how teachers should deal with unacceptable behaviors, there are no existing, universally accepted techniques. However, the techniques used by the teachers in this investigation serve both an assessment purpose as well as a judgmental one.

The techniques used reflect, in large measure, on the teacher's perceptions of the behaviors manifested by children in the classroom. These techniques indicate a certain amount of objectivity on the part of the teachers, who appear to understand that behavior cannot be changed directly, but must be dealt with as each individual event occurs, and as a natural part of the ongoing teaching-learning environment.

Summary and Conclusions

The results of this study support the premise that children's unacceptable behaviors in the classroom are functions of teacher perceptions (prejudices); the techniques used by the teacher to effectively deal with these behaviors reflect those prejudices. The results also revealed that there are techniques used by experienced teachers, which can be judged to be effective, if not on factual grounds, at least by the impressions of experience. Based on these general results, the following five conclusions are in order.

1. Children will often behave in ways expected by the teacher, although unacceptable by the teacher.

2. It is only human that teachers perceive some behaviors to be unacceptable in classroom situations, especially those that disrupt the social order and require teacher intervention. However, it is recognized that it may well be the teacher who finds unworthy motivations for a great deal of children's innocent behaviors.

3. Teachers who deal more effectively with unacceptable classroom behaviors are permissive enough to allow young children to manifest these behaviors and feelings, but understanding enough to help such children resolve their own conflicts in acceptable interactions.

4. Teachers who deal most effectively with children's unacceptable behaviors do not depend on any single technique to be applied to each child in all situations to resolve all conflicts.

5. Children who manifest unacceptable behaviors have a high degree of salience for teachers, and, perhaps elicit a disproportionate amount of disciplining input or procedures. Some of these behaviors are common among children, partly because such behaviors are tied up with normal development and growth. That is, a child's manifestation of an unacceptable behavior may be the only problem-solving technique the child knows, at the moment the particular behavior is manifested.

Finally, it is recognized that even some experienced teachers, the "best disciplinarians," are sometimes ill equipped to handle either their own prejudices against children's unacceptable behaviors or to use the most effective techniques in a given situation. However, it is believed that when experienced teachers are willing to admit their prejudices against particular childhood behaviors, and to describe the techniques they use to deal effectively with these behaviors, such teachers are less hampered with feelings of guilt about either. Therefore, if these perceptions and techniques fail to serve as generally acceptable solutions to the age-old problem of classroom discipline, they at least provide new insights into the problem of whether unacceptable classroom behaviors are functions of teacher perceptions, of whether they are discipline problems in their own right.

In this manner, the results and conclusions of this study provide new insights into the age-old problem of classroom discipline. Perhaps, the most outstanding aspect of this investigation rests with the methods used to collect and analyze the data. It invaded the sanctity of the prejudices of experienced teachers against the behaviors they perceived to be most unacceptable in the classroom, and thereby revealed the techniques teachers use to deal with such behaviors, within the contexts of the immediate situations in which they are manifested.

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